

GIS means...



Never seeing the world without a rain forest

Deforestation occurs when forests and rain forests are destroyed faster than they are replaced. For the past five years, 7.3 million hectares of forest were lost annually. More than 50,000 species of plants and animals become extinct each year due to deforestation. Natural disasters, urban growth, and commercial logging all contribute to deforestation.

In Indonesia, scientists and government officials are using geographic information system (GIS) and remote sensing technologies to protect their forest with a sustainable management system where only the mature, economically viable trees are harvested. This preserves the forest and retains it as an economic resource.

Learn more on this year's GIS Day!

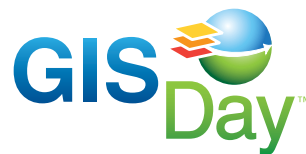
GIS Day is a grassroots event where local GIS users and vendors join together to show the public how GIS is used in their community every day. GIS Day events include lectures, software demonstrations, map galleries, games, and activities.

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Safer sailing on the deep blue sea

Man has been traveling on the open ocean for thousands of years. Early sailors relied on their experience and guesswork for navigation. The invention of the compass revolutionized ocean travel, but further inventions to determine location still provided only a limited estimate.

The global positioning system (GPS) was the first global system to provide sailors with their exact location. GPS uses a satellite system that isn't limited by distance from shore and is available all over the world.

GPS and GIS technologies do more than tell boats and ships their location. They can show water depth, currents, and even weather patterns.

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Never stopping to ask for directions

You're 500 miles from civilization, your gas gauge reads less than a quarter of a tank, and you're not sure if you went the right way at that last fork. An exit ramp appears ahead. There's no sign, but you haven't seen one for more than 200 miles. You don't see a gas station, but maybe there's one down the road. Is it worth the risk to exit here and search for a gas station or do you continue on the highway, which you're not sure is taking you where you want to go, and hope a sign appears?

In-car navigation systems are helping to prevent this from happening. Using geographic information system (GIS) and global positioning system (GPS) technologies can tell you where you are, where you're going, and where you've been. They can also tell you where the next hotel, restaurant, or gas station is.

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Never wondering what happened to the fish

Overfishing threatens both commercial and recreational fish populations. Excessive fishing one year results in lower populations the following year, which are easier to overfish. This cycle depletes the fish population so much they are unable to recover. When this link in the food chain is broken, all the animals in the web struggle.

Geographic information system (GIS) technology is allowing government officials to track fish populations. They can evaluate migration patterns, population densities, fishing yields, and environmental changes. With GIS, government officials can determine which areas to open or close to fishing, which areas need to be restocked and provide maps to fish locations. The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency publishes maps on its Web site of stocked fishing sites and wildlife management areas.

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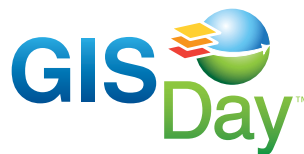
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Keeping the planes flying on time

The runways at the George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH) are the sixth busiest in the world. In 2005, planes took off and landed 562,966 times at IAH. That is almost 800 takeoffs a day, or roughly one every two minutes. Beyond the airplanes themselves, IAH has to keep its facilities safe and well maintained. The testing and replacement of the runway and navigational lights must be tracked. The emergency response plan must be prepared, tested, and kept up to date. Land, building, and facility use must be monitored.

IAH uses geographic information system (GIS) technology to help organize and analyze the vast amount of data it must track. When something needs to be repaired, IAH's GIS can tell the maintenance crew exactly where the problem is. IAH also used GIS to plan its long-term expansion project.

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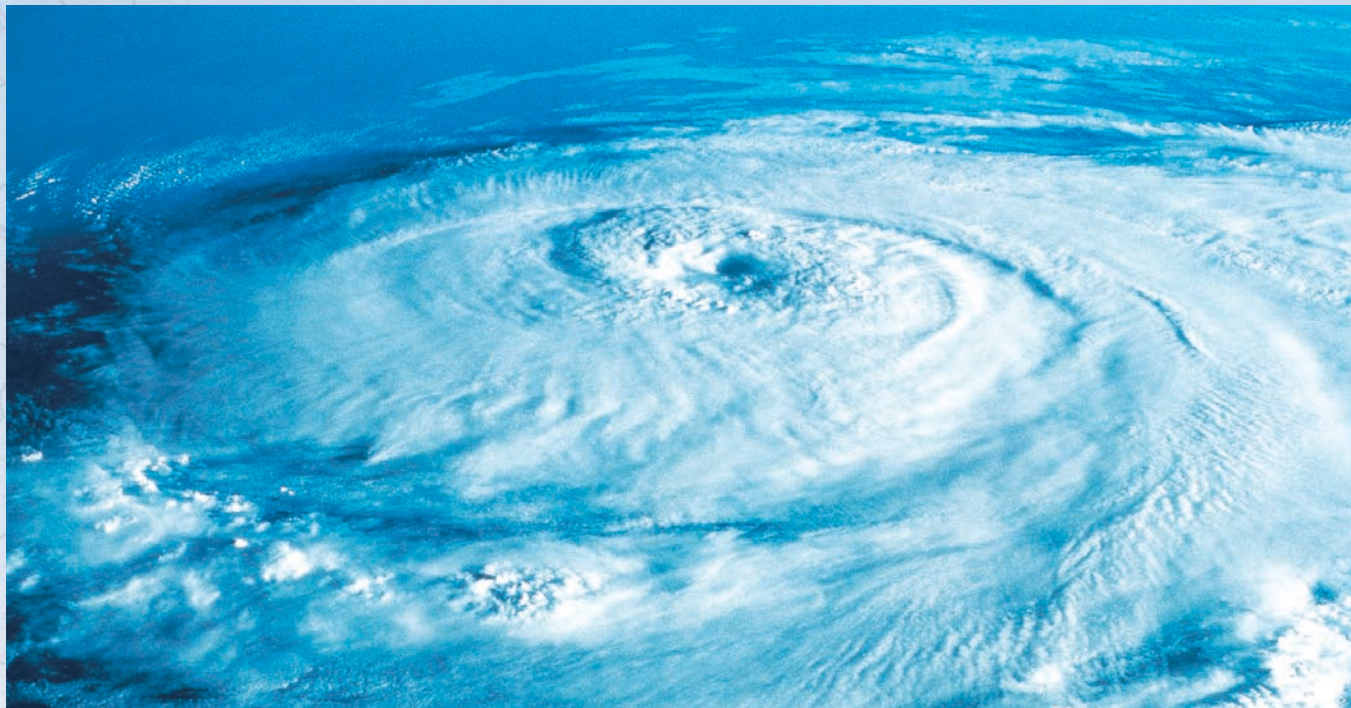
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Never feeling unprepared for the storm

Hurricanes cause an average of US\$5.1 billion in damage and more than 20 deaths per year. Hurricane Andrew caused an estimated US\$26.5 billion in damage and 26 reported deaths. Damage estimates from Hurricane Katrina approached US\$75 billion with a reported 1,200 deaths.

Counties in Florida are using geographic information system (GIS) technology to help prepare for a hurricane strike. They predict the amount and location of potential damage based on the strength of the hurricane, where it is expected to make landfall, and other environmental factors. These prediction models allow Florida counties to better prepare their emergency response teams and coordinate their evacuation plans.

The Florida Division of Emergency Management uses GIS on its Web site (www.floridadisaster.org) to inform the public about and during emergency situations. The interactive map also contains historical data of previous natural disasters.

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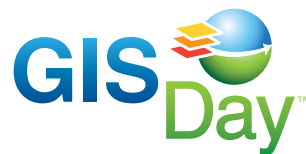
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Building safer communities

Every day, citizens all over the world depend on law enforcement agencies to protect life and property and keep peace in their communities. Virtually every task and challenge law-enforcement organizations face have some kind of geographic component. Despite collecting vast amounts of data, the agencies cannot easily absorb this information from spreadsheets and database files. Geographic information system (GIS) technology provides the key that enables them to integrate and view this data to leverage it for better decision making.

Whether helping to analyze auto theft hot spots, improve accident response time, identify sexual offender locations, monitoring parolee activity, aid with the search for missing children, or power a hot line created to assist domestic violence victims, law enforcement and community service agencies are using GIS to make cities safer. Internet and intranet GIS applications can serve information to substations, other regional agencies, or the public. By using GIS, neighborhoods can work together to reduce crime and make their streets safe.

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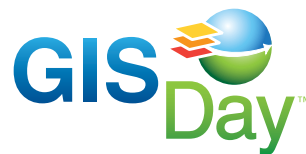
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Saving the forest from fire

Wildfires are a serious concern to the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF). Wildfires destroy an average of 9,000 acres in Virginia each year. People cause about 97 percent of the Virginian wildfires, the majority of which are caused by open fires, arson, and smoking.

VDOF is using geographic information system (GIS) technology and remote sensing to track current wildfires, identify areas susceptible to wildfires, and organize wildfire prevention and control measures. GIS allows VDOF to plan controlled burns, which help prevent the spread of wildfires. VDOF uses the Virginia Forest Resource Information Mapper (ForestrIM) to present GIS data to the public. This Internet-based system allows the user to explore hundreds of characteristics of the Virginia forests. Users can make notes on maps and save them for later.

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Providing a complete learning experience

In 2003 The US Air Force Academy had excellent geographic information system (GIS) resources and capabilities, but they were underutilized. Many of the teachers did not realize the benefits of adding GIS to their curriculum or know how to grade a GIS project. Teachers with GIS experience had little contact with each other.

A group of dedicated educators wanted to change that. They held a GIS Day event to educate teachers and students about the GIS resources available at the academy. As a result, GIS awareness is up. Approximately one third of the students signed up for the GIS elective course. Teachers in a variety of disciplines are integrating GIS into their research projects. Learn how schools are integrating GIS into the curriculum and more at this year's GIS Day event.

Learn more on this year's GIS Day!

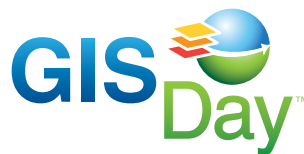
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